



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE
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CHAIRMAN:
SENATE WAYS AND MEANS

May 16, 2007

Dear Colleagues:

This year we find the Commonwealth in a fiscal situation that is characterized by expanding needs and anemic revenue growth. While we remain cognizant of our budgetary constraints, the Senate Committee on Ways and Means has worked to address the most pressing issues facing our state in our fiscal year 2008 budget recommendations.

Through initiatives in the following recommendations, we emphasize the importance of our communities and the well-being of our residents while strengthening the future of our commonwealth.

In order to turn our economic tide, we must continue to stress economic development. However, in order to encourage current businesses to stay and new industries to open their doors in Massachusetts, we must remain diligent in providing essential services.

The budget recommendations that follow will help reach our goal of providing for our Commonwealth without increasing taxes or balancing the budget on the backs of the state's most vulnerable citizens.

One of our greatest challenges continues to be the fiscal needs of our 351 cities and towns. In response to their call for assistance, we made an early commitment to invest an additional \$235 million to our communities, including funding necessary to implement the second year of the Chapter 70 education reform plan.

With the increase in violence across Massachusetts, there is no question that we must remain diligent in our commitment to public safety.

The Committee's recommendations focus on this ever-present challenge by continuing the Community Policing Grant Program, funding the new Municipal Police Program, and fully funding the mandated GPS tracking for sex offenders on probation.

These efforts also include a new program combating youth violence by focusing on at-risk youth and efforts to enhance emergency notification at our public institutions of higher education.

In addition to local aid and public safety, the Committee's recommendations work on moving the state's commitment to health care reform forward. By providing the funding necessary to take the next steps, we remain focused on providing high quality, affordable health care coverage.

Part of our health care focus remains on preventative measures which include funding for two new vaccines through the Department of Public Health and targeted increases in the areas of teen pregnancy prevention, family planning, shaken baby prevention, early intervention, substance abuse, health promotion, and environmental health.

As a whole, the following recommendations serve as a blueprint and take a proactive approach to managing the sobering economic outlook that experts are projecting for the 2008 fiscal year and beyond. By tightening the Commonwealth's fiscal belt now, it is our goal to ease the strain that is very likely to follow in subsequent fiscal years.

The budget process is an extremely challenging task. These recommendations are a result of extraordinary work, dedication and determination from both the membership and staff. I would like to extend my gratitude to my colleagues, in particular the members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, their staffs and the staff of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for their tremendous effort in producing these recommendations.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steven C. Panagiotakos', written over the printed name.

Steven C. Panagiotakos

Chairman

Senate Committee on Ways and Means